



The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

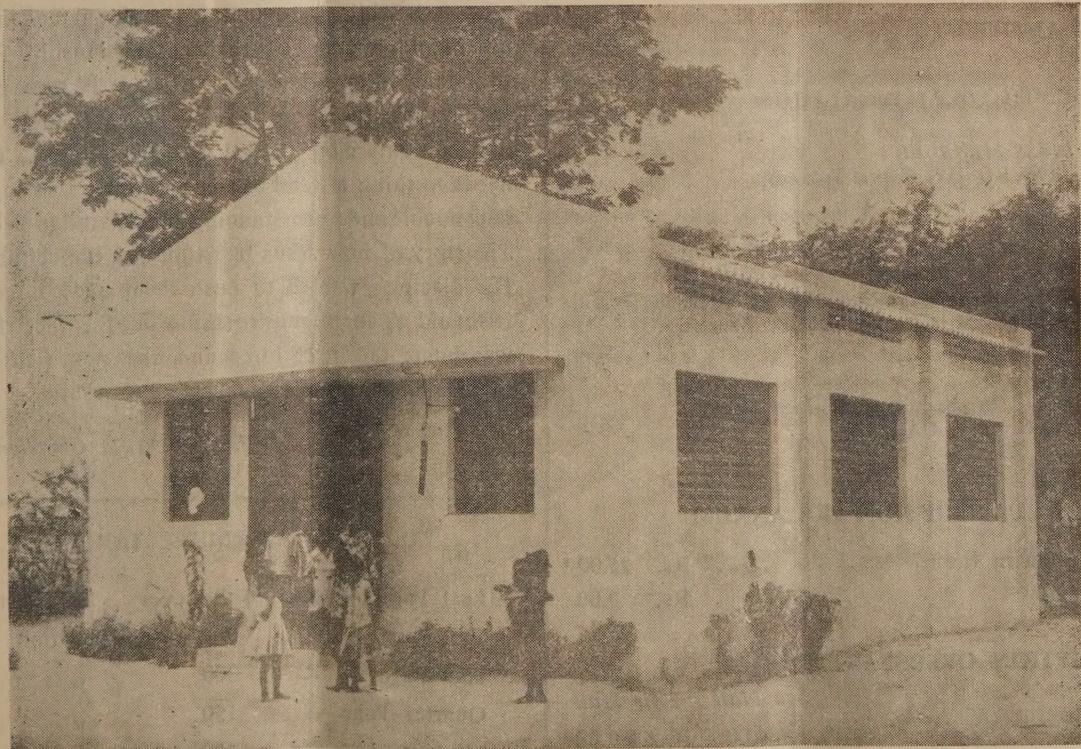
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OCTOBER 1993

EDITOR

REV. P. C. DASS BABU
MEGH DEEP APARTMENTS
MAYURI MARG
BEGUMPET
HYDERABAD-500 016. (A.P.) PHONE: 847436

HON. BUSINESS MANAGER

PROF. GEORGE KOSHY, General Secretary
Synod C.S.I. Centre
5, WHITES ROAD
ROYAPETTAH, MADRAS-600 014
Phone: 471266

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Rev. J. L. Thomas, Bronheulwen Chapel Lawn Road
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25 Years Ago!

The most outstanding characteristic of the child is his dependence upon older people. This is more noticeable in the pre-school years, and by the time he comes to school the child is beginning to take a real interest in other children and want their companionship. However, the moment anything goes wrong it is to a grown-up that he will turn, and it is the approval of the teacher that he wants more than that of his fellows. The child needs to think of God as someone who is strong, loving dependable and understanding and interested in children. The story of how Jesus had time for the children when His disciples wanted to push them aside is good, but it should be so total as to bring out the fact that Jesus was interested in children and did not want to use them merely as an object lesson to adults.

—J. F. FORRESTER, *Churchman* 1950.

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Sam Mathew Is The New Bishop Of Madhya Kerala Diocese

Most Rev. Dr. Vasanth P. Dandin, the moderator consecrated Rev. Sam Mathew as the Bishop of Madhya Kerala Diocese at 10 a.m. on the 1st of September 1993, at the CSI cathedral Kottayam.

The presence of several bishops specially bishop from the Mar Thoma Church and the General Secretary, Prof. George Koshy who read out the Instrument of Appointment from the Synod of the Church of South India; the presence of several guests from the other dioceses and a huge attendance of the congregations and all the pastors of the diocese, the consecration service was a glorious one. Rev. Dass Babu, the Director of the Communications Department was also present.

Bishop K.J. Samuel, who shouldered the responsibility of being the moderator's Commissary of the diocese, preached on the occasion, listing out the duties of a bishop which would enrich the spiritual life of congregations. Bishop M.C. Mani, the retired bishop took all the care to see the service becomes a memorable one. Rev. Ninan, the incharge presbyter of the cathedral, Rev. Thomas Samuel, the Treasurer of the diocese and Mr. Verkey George, the Secretary, worked hard to see that everything goes smoothly.

Bishop Jason Dharmaraj, the Deputy Moderator; Bishop Sam Amirthan, Bishop Kuruvilla; Bishop Seth; Bishop Benjamin and Bishop John Theodore were the Bishops who graced the occasion.

Besides being highly experienced and educated Bishop Sam Mathew is known for his integrity and friendship. His wife, an eversmiling lady, is very kind-hearted and hospitable.

We congratulate the Bishop and pray to God, the Almighty to bless his ministry abundantly.

— DASS BABU
Editor.



Bishop Sam Mathew (centre, kneeling) consecrated by the Moderator Vasanth P. Dandin and installed. On the lefthand side is the Deputy Moderator, Bishop Jason Dharmaraj.

Hindutva and a New Paradigm for Mission

REV. DR. GODWIN R. SINGH

The rapidity of events happening on the national scene during the past few months has provided a tremendous impetus to the Hindutva movement in India. We as Christians in India cannot afford to be silent spectators of these. The new situation calls for deep soul-searching. The lamenting of our past and present inaction with the usual litany of what we have not done and blaming it on the Church, using her as a convenient scapegoat, a vague seat of ecclesiastical authority somewhere or an edifice somewhere out there. Can we so naively absolve ourselves of our guilt? The present writer does see the fallacy of indulging in the usual exercise of judging the Church as an outsider. We Christians are the Church in India. What is being said here is addressed to ourselves, not as a communal minority but as the body of Christ. Each one of us should have been involved meaningfully in the past and present of our nation. Only when the church in India can claim to be a creative minority. We cannot exonerate ourselves by doing our token of "service" to our neighbours and use that excuse to dismiss what has happened as Hindu chauvinism and as an alarming demonstration of power of the majority. By remaining indifferent to our neighbours, we will be guilty of shirking from fulfilling our task of evolving a praxis and theology to cope meaningfully and charitably with our sisters and brothers of other faiths. Our current stance may be likened to that of the proverbial ostrich. This may lead us to deliberate self-alienation and further distancing from our neighbours.

The Hindutva ferment is a modern popular movement. It is characterised by a radical shift in the attitude of our Hindu neighbour. V.D. Savarkar who may be called one of the earliest exponents of Hindutva articulated a unidimensional idea of India nation in 1937. In the same vein, Golwalkar in 1939 defined and further propagated a new idea of Hindu nationhood and outlined the plan for the Hindu rashtra. He advocated that the freedom struggle must aim to achieve this objective. As a proponent of Hindutva ideology, he gave the slogan of "Hindu, Hindi and Hindusthan". Savarkar and Golwalkar's advocacy for Hindutva was basically revivalistic and exclusivistic. Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Ramrajya and Swaraj or self-government, though based on Hindu spirituality and Western humanism were not so exclusivistic. Gandhi's interpretation of Hindutva, if the term may be used so, sought to accommodate all minority groups. On similar

lines Rabindranath Tagore, a Hindu of liberal ideas propagated Hinduism as a non-sectarian and a secular way of life. Tagore endeavoured to promote the underlying unity of the Indian culture. This brand of secular Indian nationalism was quite far removed from the idea of aggressive Hindutva as understood today. Jawaharlal Nehru tried to show unity in diversity as the predominant aspect of the Hindu or rather Indian historical reality. Nehru's search for defining elusive "Indianness" could not come to grips with the reality of caste, racialism, ethnicity and class in the sub-continent and had a wavering and ambiguous delineation. As an alternative to Hindutva ideology and to counter the secular humanistic ideologies of Gandhi and Tagore, B.R. Ambedkar advocated that cherishing the idea of full bloomed nationhood was a great delusion. The post-colonial India will have to struggle in history to prove in future of attaining nationhood. India is still a nation in the making and the process is not finished. Ambedkar tried to devise a constitutional mould which would help in the evolution of a viable nationhood. For him also the main problem was dealing with the complexities of the religious, linguistic, cultural, caste, ethnic and tribal minorities in India. In spite of these, framing of workable constitution itself was a daunting task of integrating pluralism and envisioning a united Indian people. We should be indebted to him for this contribution.

By constitutionalising the diversity, the minorities were given a benevolent patronage in independent India. The immediate need was devising a satisfactory electoral system and secularism was envisaged not as a negation of communalism but a sum total of different Indian communalisms. This was viewed as an alternative to Hindutva and was based on the insights of the western concept of secularism. This line of thought was questioned which resulted in divergent views of secularism vis-a-vis Hindutva. Secularism was understood as separation of religion from politics. It was also understood as having an equally balanced approach of respect or indifference towards all religions. Secularism also meant to oppose communalism and to strive for co-existence of diverse religions. However, the contemporary Hindutva schooled would reject all these views as pseudo-secularistic. According to them, Western secularism cannot solve the communal problem in India. In order to build a genuinely

realistic and united nation in India, the promotion of Hindutva ideology derived from the spirituality of Hindu Dharma will be the only appropriate alternative to the called secular ideology.

The Hindutva ideology which is advocated currently is a movement for building up of Hindu consciousness, unity and assertion of power. One of its objectives is to forge a united front amongst all those defined as Hindus living here or abroad but who have been fragmented and divided into groups and castes and are in conflict with each other. In the past the weakness of the Hindus allowed foreigners to invade and rule over India. This made the minority communities to become disfiant. So to reassert power, the Hindus must become conscious of their underlying common identity and rediscover the unity which is submerged. This is not only to unite but also toouse Hindus, to awaken their spirit.

The object is jagriti i.e. awakening. Hindus have to come out of their inertia and regain their swabhimani or self-respect. This is more than merely a revival of the classical Hindu ethos. Hindutva is a conscious effort to develop a powerful Hindu personality. The movement is characterised by polemics against the current understanding of secularism. Dharm nirpekshta is Western in origin and must be discarded. Qualities like tolerance and generosity which were formerly claimed by Hindus as innate virtues of their spiritual heritage are now identified as signs of weakness, the reasons for their inertia, apathy and passivity. Hindutva seeks to instill new values to build-up a revived nation.

The struggle to regain Ram Janambhoomi, the birthplace of Lord Ram is prompted by this ideology. By unchaining this, Hindutva movement seeks to mobilise the Hindu masses to have an assertive sense of their being and to generate a new consciousness. The early 1980s saw the beginnings of a new phase of intensive Hindu mobilisation. A series of virat and vishal Hindu sammelans or gatherings were organised nationwide. Ekta rath-yatras or chariot processions for unity were organised. Temple rituals like aarti were introduced in public. An ambitious plan of building new temple was envisioned and the ceremony of shilaniyas or laying of foundation stones were performed. This mobilisation entails demonstration of Hindu power. Assertive Hindutva posture admits diversity within Hinduism but seeks to repress it. In the arena of politics, it promotes an aggressive political participation. It is against adopting a soft or moderate political line. The manifestation of Hindutva campaign in religion, politics and quasi-political areas is promoted by the Bharatiya Janata Party, Shiv Sena, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Bajrang Dal and a host of samajas and samitis of Hindu sadhus and sants, acharyas, mahants and heads of mutts. Hindutva promotes the use of vocabulary which had been in vogue in the past but is now injected with new meanings e.g., the use of words like Hindusthan and Bharat instead of the word 'India'. The new thinking highlights the concern that numerically Hindu community is shrinking in comparison to the

minorities and suggests steps and measures to raise Hindu population. It advocates that the present national anthem be replaced with another patriotic song entitled Vande Matram. Hindutva protagonists have encouraged revival of sati, a medieval custom of widow-burning. They have strongly supported the anti-reservation stir declaring that depressed people should not be given any privileges and special consideration in recruitment of jobs. However, recently there is a switch in this stance. They have changed their attitude to issues of social justice to counter Mandal Issue and to express solidarity with the Dalits. The Bharatiya Janata Party's new slogan has been Ram, roti and insaaf (justice). As election strategy Bharatiya Janata Party promised uniform civil code in "Ramrajya" where no one will be discriminated.

The one event which made the world focus attention on Hindutva campaign was the demolition of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya. The chronology of events leading to this unfortunate incident goes back to the Moghul history. The mosque was allegedly raised in 1528 A.D. on the site of Lord Ram's birth place or Ram Janambhoomi where a temple existed from the time of Maharaja Vikramaditya. Much later in 1885 an unsuccessful effort was made to build a temple alongside the mosque. In 1946 the mosque was declared as a waqf property to be used by Muslims. In 1949, Lord Ram's idol was forcibly installed inside the premises. The main gate had to be locked and the government took over the disputed property. In 1961, the Suni Waqf Board moved court demanding possession of the mosque. Subsequently in 1984 the Vishwa Hindu Parishad launched Ram Janambhoomi Mukti Yagna Samiti with Hindu sadhus to possess the site. To counter this Babri Masjid Action Committee was launched. In 1989 the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the sadhus called for building of Ram Temple. The high court declared the site was disputed. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad was determined and vowed to build the temple at the disputed janamsthan. But the Babri Masjid Action committee was opposed to shifting the mosque. A court judgement based on historical facts was pending when on 6 December 1992 the disputed structure was demolished during a mob frenzy. The experts felt that the Hindutva campaign has never had such widespread appeal among the Hindu masses as it did at the demolition and following it. An assertive consciousness has gripped the urban upper caste Hindus. This happened at considerable expense of communal harmony. The shocking events in the wake of the demolition have widened the divide between the communities and the relations are at their worst. Even if the mosque is rebuilt, the antiquity is lost forever. What is needed are healing, reconciliation and charity. The Church in India faces the challenging task of bringing about healing and compassion in this brokenness of these embittered communities.

By the turn of the present century, the emerging national issues which will stare the Indian people squarely in the face will be denial of justice, rights of the Dalits, of women and in the wake of these, ecological imbalance and depletion and unequal sharing of resources and subsequently terrorism!! These will no longer remain

matters to be dealt by professionals or development experts but will percolate as existential concerns to the very grassroots as matters of survival or death. For example, to take only one issue out of the plethora energy generation will become a crucial survival issue. Also with it will be tied not only the nuclear option but a host of other problems like damming of major rivers for hydel energy, stripping and depletion of fossil fuels for thermal energy. Coupled with search for energy sources for unsatisfiable search for development there will be allied problems of pollution, poisoning, deforestation, disasters, submerging of cultures and habitats and deprivation of the Dalits of their basic rights. There will be options but these will also be glaring economic and ethical contradictions. The Church in India will be pushed to take a clear stand on these issues. She no longer will have the luxury of being indifferent. We have accountability not only to our neighbours but also towards the future generations. With nuclearisation, we face the predicament of false promises of progress, employment and abundant power with cancer, still birth, sterility and vulnerability to diseases. Are we as Christians, individually and as Church prepared to take a stand on these issues? The whole issue of deprivation of basic rights, and justice to the oppressed and dispossessed people in the Church is a question of which we have to hang our heads in shame.

The Hindutva upsurge has highlighted the tensions involved in struggle of the weaker sections of the Indian society. One glaring incident is its open support to the anti-reservation policy and sharp opposition to the Mandal report. How has this been viewed by us as Christians who face the Dalit issue in the Church? This is a pressing issue which will not wait. We should be grateful to the Hindutva wave for bringing home the pressing urgency.

In the wake of Hindutva upsurge, the importance of Hindu-Christian dialogue is obvious. We are called for not only dialogue in words and ideas but also in working together. Should it be the fear of isolation which prompts us into dialogue? The Christians are sometimes branded as a denationalised and deculturalised community in India. Of course such charges are facile and not based on facts and history. It should not be the alarming fear but it is the genuine love for God's people and creation which

should inspire us into dialogue. We must transcend denominational interests and articulate our Christian conviction with a united voice. It is time that dialogue should come out of the confines of experts. Of course people on the streets may not be interested in theological and epistemological issues in their dialogue. For the vital concerns are the right to existence and survival. We need to dialogue on the level of daily living and the dialogue must not exclude the so-called extremists and fundamentalists, both on Hindutva and on Christian side. The Hindutva upsurge is a remainder to Christians in India that they need an ample knowledge of an empathy with their neighbours who reverently address the reality of the sub-continent as 'Bharat Mata'. In order to dialogue we need to have accurate information and knowledge of the plurality of our neighbours. Unfortunately, often in the situation of potential dialogue we find ourselves illiterate about our knowledge of our neighbours. We must demolish the traditional barriers set up between our neighbours and ourselves. There must be a radical questioning of the tradition which hampers us from launching into frank dialogue. Let us venture into the deep where communities have hurt each other. If we fail to brace ourselves for dialogue, the future will pull us in as an unwilling and an ill prepared Church not up to the mark! This entails a radical rethinking of our paradigm for mission — the entire corpus of faith, tradition, values and even techniques. The task is extremely delicate in our situation where every effort on our part is likely to be construed or suspected of proselytising and "conversion"! In Indian context mission of God and dialogue cannot be done separately in neat and water-tight division of mission, evangelism and dialogue. This calls for a new paradigm for mission which would be relevant in the new situation. This shift in our approach will not be easy and smooth. But if we want to be challenged to address to the new situation we must be prepared to take the risk of jettisoning some obsolete baggage of the tradition more so because some Christian tradition is borrowed from the Western missions. Otherwise the Church will cease to be relevant to the context.

(Rev. Dr. Godwin R. Singh is the Principal of Leonia Theological College, Jabalpur, M.P.)

NEWS

Hope for living

Church of Bangladesh

"Though the cyclone and tidal surge has snatched away all my belongings and taken my own people from me by being involved with the development activities of the Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme, I have now seen a new hope for living". These words were uttered by a middle aged woman, Joygoon Bibi, aged 42, a housewife of a landless and assetless farmer of east Baroghona village of Banskhali, Chittagong.

Joygoon Bibi was living peacefully and comfortably in east Baroghona village with her husband and four children. The severe cyclonic storm and tidal surge of April '91 demolished her peaceful abode and made her helpless. She never dreamt that such a state of things would ever happen in her life, but it did! When she arrived at the relief camp, she was found with a child in her lap staring at the relief worker as if she was searching for some of her near and dear ones. She had eaten nothing during the previous few days, but the crying of the child in her lap compelled her to move towards the relief camp as a last resort. It was learnt from some of her neighbours that Joygoon Bibi had everything and there were none of her own left except this child, Rokon aged 2.

...that they should be with him

MRS. KRUPAVENI PRAKASA RAO,* *Vijayawada*

MARK 3:14,15— “And He ordained Twelve that should be with Him, and that He might send them to preach and to have power to heal sickness, and cast out devils.”

Dear Young friends,

I congratulate you all for being chosen by your respective Dioceses for participating in this youth conference. I also would like to congratulate the President, Secretary/Convenor and Members of the C.S.I. Synod Youth board for having thought of organising a Youth conference at the Synodical level after a lapse of about years.

Though I said earlier congrats for being chosen by your respective dioceses, I strongly feel that it is God who has chosen you with a purpose to participate in this conference and to be used as an instrument in His hands in your diocese.

That they should be with Him: Let us turn to the word of God that's just been read to us, in St. Mark 4:15. Here, we see Jesus selecting and ordaining His disciples for a specific purpose, that they should be with Him etc., etc. Yes, the first purpose of being chosen by God is to be with Him. As young boys and girls you know the happiness of being with the family, the joy of being with the parents. Yes, it is that kind of joyful ownership, God wants to have with His chosen. You may ask, “How can we live with Him these days when Jesus is not present physically in this World”. I will give you a small example. A mother was busy working in the kitchen on a Sunday. She did not find her son in the living room and fearing some mischief, she shouted “Tom, what are you doing”? The boy replied from his bedroom stairs, “Mum, I am watching Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. The mother came up and found to her surprise, that the boy was reading St. John 11th Chapter from his children Bible presented to him in the Sunday School. Jesus says, “When God sent His son into the World, He was the Word, — God's self-expression in human form”. Therefore, it is the word of God, the Bible which helps us to live with him if we read it meaningfully.

This address was given at the Youth conference held at Vijayawada in

Krupaveni is the Regional Deputy Director of Women's Development Child Welfare, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh.

Then, it is through prayer and meditation that one can live in fellowship with God. Prayer is the two-way channel through which one can communicate with God and get the answers from God. Gospels tell us how Jesus, the son of God, Himself spent His time in prayer at all times.

Finally, it is the Holy spirit who would guide us and help us to live in fellowship with God. Jesus said that Father would give His Holy spirit to those who ask for it. This is what we need in our lives today, the Holy spirit. Ask and you shall receive.

When we learn to live with Him, then He will empower us and will do wonders in and through our lives. The lives of the disciples, after they were filled with the Holy spirit are the witness to this fact. Acts 4:13,14 tell us that marvelling at the wonderful miracles performed by the disciples and at their boldness in proclaiming the “Good news”, the people realized that “they had been with Jesus”. This is the greatest witness any disciple could ever give. Friends, Jesus expects this from you and me. Let the World know and acknowledge that these are the people who live with Jesus, when they see us.

The cost of discipleship:

But, then, what is discipleship? and Is there a price to pay for becoming a disciple? This is the question which needs to be thought over. Jesus had only 12 disciples. Although more than 500 met Him after His resurrection, only 120 were in the upper Room and made their commitment to Him. Many came to Jesus for physical healing, others for emotional healing and got healed without any price or condition. But to those who wanted to be part of His army, a disciple, He spells out the cost in clear terms. To the rich young ruler, Jesus said, “Go sell all and give to the poor and come and follow me”. To another man who said he would follow Him, He said, “Foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the son of man has no place to put his head down”. But to another He says “ Let the dead bury their dead, you come and follow me”.

There are three requirements for discipleship. *First is obedience.* One must be prepared to accept the Lordship of Jesus in one's lives. One must be prepared to do His will, come what may. The early disciples understood this and practiced in their lives. They were forbidden to preach and heal in the name of Jesus. But, their reply was, “We

must obey God rather than men". Because of such implicit obedience, even at the cost of their personal safety, the early church grew at such a rapid rate. "Jesus" was seen and experienced in and through the Church. *Secondly, disciples must have faith.* Faith is the willingness and ability to receive God's gifts. We should have faith which makes us realise our emptiness, and which would help us to receive God's abundant blessings, as St. Paul said, "We are, therefore, justified by faith". *Finally, the cost of discipleship is the way of the Cross.* Jesus bore this Cross. He was humiliated, despised, rejected and suffered unto death on the Cross. Cross made Jesus, the Christ. And He said, "If any one wants to follow me, let him bear his cross and follow me". What is our Cross today? What is it that is preventing us from serving Jesus fully? The answer is, "the pull of the World", as a Bishop in Malasia

said it. Specially to the youth, the World with all attractions is the cross. One needs to give up the World standards and values. The rich man of Jesus' time, asked to sell and give to the poor and then follow Jesus. Not only the riches, but it could be anything that one is attached to, to an extent of being in bondage or enclaves. They come in the way of being a true disciple of Jesus. So, dear young friends, God asks for a complete break from the worldly attachments and expectations. If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation. Therefore, commit yourselves to our Lord and His Ministry, even as you are in this conference, completely surrendering yourself. Then the Lord would use you in such a way that the World would acknowledge that you lived with Jesus.

May God help you and use you in His Ministry.

CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL 1993 NOVEMBER 8-14

"Children Leaders of the new Community". Isaiah 11:6

Purpose of Children's Festival :

Children's Festival is a programme of the Church to celebrate God's gift of children. Every year a Festival spanning a period of one week is organised with the following purposes :

- ☛ to thank God for the gift of children in our families;
- ☛ to pray for the Church's ministry among the needy children;
- ☛ to praise God for the involvement of individuals, organisations and supporting bodies in the Child Care ministry;
- ☛ to create an awareness among the people about the needs of children;
- ☛ to motivate individuals, families and the congregations to participate in the Child Care ministry;
- ☛ to encourage community participation in the wholistic development of the child within the community.

Children's Festival - by whom and for whom:

It is a festival organised at the congregational level by the members of the congregation with the help and involvement of the families for the benefit of the children of the community

Suggested Programmes:

- ☛ Corporate Worship
- ☛ Family Prayers
- ☛ Creative Activities
- ☛ Talent Contests

The role of CSI-CCC in the Festival:

- ☛ Organising Seminars for leaders;
- ☛ Providing necessary help to organise Diocesan/Church level Pastors meetings;
- ☛ Printing and supply of pamphlets, leaflets, posters, write-ups on the theme and liturgy;

For further Information:

The Director
CSI Council for Child Care
26 Lavelle Rd., BANGALORE.

Baptism and Confirmation – Covenant and Fulfilment

Dear Santhosh,

You have responded to my last letter that it is an "exaggerated distinction to call those children who receive baptism as 'grace Christians' and those who receive it as adults as 'faith Christians'! I think you are right. To make a strong point one overstates the case. We are both 'grace Christians' and 'faith Christians' at the same time. For without faith we cannot truly be Christians. But God's grace has prevenience. It is because he first loved us that we are able to love Him (1 John 4:10). When we see the love manifested on the Cross, we are moved in our hearts to surrender ourselves to Him.

There is one thing that those who give baptism to children must remember. Child baptism has its consummation in the Confirmation. Sometimes we call these two sacraments "one act separated by time" - even upto 14 years.

The conviction is this. Christian parents cannot leave their children unbaptised for too long. So as early as possible, usually after 41 days, they are baptised. But their understanding of and response to this act at that age is very limited. So they are baptised on the basis of and on behalf of the faith of their parents or god-parents. Parents make a covenant with God for the child. But when they are about 14, at the Confirmation service they publically confess Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior of the World. The promise and covenant at Baptism are now personally made one's own finding their fulfillment at Confirmation.

I often remind the confirmands that this is *the day of their salvation*, the day they accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord of their life and surrendered themselves totally to Him. Mark it in your Bible. Remember it all your life.

It is somewhat like engagement and marriage. In the engagement a covenant is made; in the marriage it is honoured and fulfilled. Some have been engaged for more than few years — a friend of mine for 7 years. The length of the period of time in itself is not significant.

But the time itself is a very meaningful period. It is not just a time to honour the agreement, it is also a time of waiting and hope. It is a time of getting to know each other before making final mutual commitment, and making it publically.

If someone receives baptism as an adult, he or she can be confirmed within a much shorter time after he or she has learned the fundamentals of Christian faith and the person shows signs of growth in understanding of and commitment to Jesus Christ.

In the early church catechumens (those who sought to become Christians) were confirmed once a year at the Easter Vigil Service.

So we can understand baptism and confirmation as one event separated in time. Mk. 10:13-16 teaches us the meaning of the first part of this act. Jesus accepts children even if the adults prevented them from coming to Jesus. He blessed them and challenged the adults to be like the children, if they would enter the kingdom.

Rom. 10 : 9-10 teaches us about the second part of the act. Believing in heart and confessing by mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord. Grace and faith compliment and fulfil each other. The one cannot be without the other.

A baptised person by grace is incorporated into the Body of Christ, and becomes a believing person through faith. At the service of confirmation that person begin to partake in the body and blood of our Lord and continues to be nourished by this sacrament of the Holy Communion in Christian life. Such a person abides in Christ and receives power to live a crucified life for others.

This letter is brief and so I could not take up all the related issues. But I hope that I have made clear to you the integral relationship between the two sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Theologically yours,
Sam Amirtham
Bishop

JUSTICE AND PEACE — SHALOM

Ms. SUSAN CHANDY,* *Madras*

Text: 2 Corinthians: 4:1-12

We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.

In a painting competition for children different pictures were painted of 'evangelism'. One child drew big stadium full of people with an evangelist in white suit, great musical extravaganza and people with raised hands; some others painted pictures of hell and heaven with a well dressed evangelist speaking to an ugly sickman on the side of hell, and also a salesman trying to argue and convince a reluctant person to try 'Jesus', and to some a ten-letter unwelcome word. Reflecting on these paintings one felt most of us are not cutout to sell; nor we are shrewd enough to play intellectual games with people of other faiths. No tricks nor deception works here. It is *truth* spoken in love so that the joy of salvation flows through as Paul reveals to Corinthians in this passage, — the touchpoint of christian education.

Jerome's commentary records that the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians is an authentic, personal letter written from Macedonia. As is evident, the author's emotions were close to the surface while writing it. His words project a very emotional man hurt at times by misunderstandings, and dogmatic implications of some of the Corinthians. The letter is Paul's defence before them, and a revelation or explanation of the nature of his ministry before the Corinthians. In chapter 3 he compares the old and the new covenants (3:11). He refers to the fading away of the splendour of Moses' face as a sign of the transitory nature of the Old Covenant; and Paul's own sufferings and the motives thereof. In the passage we read (4:3) it is said that he preached the truth even though it was a stumbling block (Skandalon) and foolishness (moria) to others (4:3-4). He refers to those who are on the way to perdition — obviously he does not think they are lost and reasons out the need for further ministry among them, so that they may be rescued from their own blindness.

* Bible study conducted at the C.C.A., N.C.C.I., Workshop organised by the C.S.I. Department of Christian Education in August on the theme Christian Education — Justice & Peace Ms. Susan Chandy is the member of C.C.A. Women's Commission.

Paul says he preaches Christ and not himself. God now shines forth in the apostle's heart and also in our hearts, and so "the knowledge of the divine glory can produce such knowledge in others".

The apostolic ministry is the 'treasure' for him and in verse 7 he returns to the theme of his own weakness. Because of the poor instrument that he is, God's glory and power is all the more manifest in him. Verse 10 brings forth two aspects of his life; one of continual dying pointing to the redeeming death of Christ and the other of spiritual success pointing to redemption through Christ's death and the gift of his grace.

Paul's is a model of educating others at the cost of himself in the worldly sense, up against all odds, yet with the courage of his conviction that Christ lives. He tries hard to make this truth penetrate, and his helper the Holy Spirit, the comforter, the revealer, the enabler; hence the victory. Paul's body perished in his struggle, but the ideal that he showed spread a glorious light after him — which is all that we hope about imparting knowledge in the Christian way.

Readings : Ps. 85:10-13

Why does the Psalmist speak about Shalom? Why do we talk about Shalom? It is because Peace and Justice is absent in almost all aspects of life. The need to build up peace around us has become imperative, politically, culturally and economically. To play the role of peacemakers the Christian church may have to become more vocal and make advancements in certain contexts; Be silent and unclaiming in certain others, carrying Christ's death in her body so that his divine glory shines through, we may have to preach "only Christ", where our personal faith becomes very necessary and evangelism would carry the meaning of "sharing".

Biblical scholars say that the Hebrew word 'peace' is used in the scriptures more times than any other word. 'Shalom' carries many theological meanings. It is a 'situation' or a state representing the well being of individuals or communities. It means health, security. (Jer.6:4, Is.57:18, Ps.38:3, Psalm 20:7, 21:21 2 Sam. 17:3)

Shalom means safe travel (Gen. 26:29) (Ex.18:23) (Is.55:12).

Sleep safely (Ps.4:8) (Lev.26:6). Ez. 34:25) dwell securely without fear (Lev. 26:6, Ez.28:26).

Rain at proper season, increase in the yield of the land (Ez.34:26, Lev.26:24).

Prosperity (Deut.23:11, Jer.29:7, 38:24) no war (Lev. 26:6 Eccl. 3:8, IChron. 2:5 Micha 3:5).

Long life (Gen.15:15, Jer.34:5-2 Kg.22:20) Completeness, to finish (1 Kg.9:25, Ne.6:25 I:44:26, 28).

Shalom does not exist for itself, it can only exist through the process of 'making'. The Hebrew word for a 'just weight' is a "peaceful weighing of a balance" (peaceful balance) (Deut. 25:15) (Prov.11:19) so also is "peaceful wages" meaning full pay/reward (Ruth 2:12). Situation of Shalom has to be created and made possible. The concept of Shalom originated in Jud. 6:25 where Gideon pronounces 'Jehovah Shalom'. The OT prophets have theologized the concept that Shalom *belongs to God*. He *owns* Shalom. Love, faithfulness, righteousness and salvation these four bring peaceful realities in the world (Ps.85:10-13) which are parallels of God's peace. These concepts of peace are used to evaluate false peace ideology of the false prophets and rulers, unjust political and economic situation (Mic. 3:5, Jer.23:1-20) Shalom of the O.T. is perfected in the N.T. by saying how to achieve the same wholeness in personal, social, spiritual and physical spheres of life.

Jesus Teachings

'The heart of Jesus' preaching is the kingdom of God, a reality that is present in the world, but the fulfillment of which is yet to come (Mk. 1:15). The signs of *Kingdom* are the same as the experience of *Shalom* in the O.T. and this is life in its fullness and concern for the community. Conflict was very much the part of his ministry of Shalom and we who follow Him today cannot expect a different experience. He had a new scale of values — based on love, Justice, peace and freedom and also based on the relationship to God and relationship with each other.

Our Situation

What we have in common with the Israelites and the Corinthians is the suffering and pain springing out of injustice and evil that surrounds us. Our theology of Shalom is colored by the Asian realities of economic disparity, inequality of the labourer and the employer, the tension between the first and the third world, gendre issues and many others. The teaching ministry of the church has to take a holistic approach to these. The theological schools and colleges should promote awareness in students and also as in Paul, guide the students to "the knowledge of the divine glory which can produce such knowledge in others".

Bishop Gorai's new book on "New Horizons in Christian ministry" warns against individualism. He says more than ever before people should act together. A *Community vision* is the order of the day, where individual dreams can often become liabilities for the community.

The greatest need of our times is, the Christian education should address the community's needs, and fully use the capacity of those who are involved in it. Training is very important here. Its scope must be broadened and made relevant so that ordinary people can participate in theological way of life.

There has been a stress on scientific education during these last few centuries, which has managed to put off religious education even from Christian schools and colleges. At present there is a stress on 'value education' which also holds the danger of lack of commitment if given in an arbitrary manner. We in India, after 45 years of independence surprisingly, stands at the threshold of teaching or learning the first lessons of communal harmony and national integration as it was exhibited in recent times through violence. Wasn't it the result of a scientific culture devoid of humaneness and religious faith, which promoted selfish consumerism and wrong mode of secularism. Science without religion to mellow it has lost its goal, — 'Sumam bonum' the good of all.

Bishop Masilamani Azaria's book published in 1989 'Mission in Christ's way in India Today' quotes 'Theology can become power only if it is appropriated by the oppressed masses in whose interests it is to change the world'. As we live in the times, when Gandhism is a spent force, and where an opposition party is absorbed into the politics of power, people have to be awakened into 'doing theology' which is different from mere learning as in the past, so that it could create a social order of justice and freedom. God's people are the suffering people. Hence, the entire Christian education system should revolve around strategies of 'empowering'. The women and the powerless as the Lord's preferential option, Ch.Ed. should help in recreating a program that will 'empower' them. And also *history* should be the history of events that creates awareness of God's hand working from time to time enabling changes.

A 'knowing encounter' with Christ should be the aim of all theological endeavour, with Christ who would have disowned the politicalism, gendre inequality, poverty and caste difference of our times; with Christ who would call out to all those who will co-operate with him in this struggle.

In our particular national situation definitive stand on issues regarding education is called for; Definite demands to the churches and educational institutions/organisations have to be made; 'Preaching only Christ', rather than the build up of a structure, in the process of which the Lord may increase, and His value system prevail; Correct motivations, draw out suitable action plans, promote genuine christian fellowship among churches and proper nurture of all believers. Let not the legacies of the past endanger future action plans, may shalom be planned, organised in deliberate measures, as it is God's will, may 'His Kingdom come'.

Gospel and Culture — A Proposal For an Ecumenical Agenda

REV. DR. CHRISTOPHER DURAISINGH, Geneva

One of the primary functions of the WCC is to work for the breaking down of barriers between peoples and the promotion of one human family in justice and peace. The goal of visible unity and common witness of churches in each place and in all places that the WCC is committed to is integrally related to the unity of humankind. As former General Secretary Philip Potter repeatedly asserted, 'The whole burden of the ecumenical movement is to cooperate with God in making the *oikumene* an *oikos*, a home, a family of men and women, ... of varied gifts, cultures, possibilities where openness, trust, love and justice reign'. Such an *oikos* cannot but be a house of 'dialogue of cultures'.

It is with a view to laying a sound basis for promoting this dialogue that the WCC Programme Unit on Life, Education and Mission is embarking on a major study to probe the relationship between gospel and culture from an ecumenical perspective.

Theological and Missiological Background

a. The San Antonio World Conference on Mission and Evangelism (1989) reaffirmed the central role of Ephesians 1:9-10 in providing a vision and a framework for mission thinking, and at its Canberra Assembly, the WCC declared: "A reconciled and renewed creation is the goal of the mission of the Church. The vision of God uniting all things in Christ is the driving force of its life and sharing". But in such a process of God's reuniting of all things, "the diversity of cultures is of immediate relevance ... for it affects both the relationships within the churches and also the relationship with people of other faiths." (This is also a recognition of the intrinsic relation between religion and culture.)

Only such a vision can adequately undergird the mission of the Church in which every particular context and culture has its proper place and yet its profile and contradictions are relativized. It is only within such a horizon too that we can affirm the relatedness of all cultures; and yet each may be broken open by a process of transformation in the power of the all-renewing Spirit.

- b. The understanding of the Church as *koinonia* (community) also leads us in a similar direction and provides a theological context for raising the issue of the encounter between the gospel and a plurality of cultures in a fruitful way.
- c. One of the most significant features of the contemporary context is the struggle for particular cultural, ethnic or religious identities everywhere. Often, each of these narrow group identities emerges or asserts itself in a conflictual and competitive manner which denies room for others. In such a context, an essential aspect of the Church's mission is to be a sign, foretaste and instrument of a God-intended human community, a household of cultures, reconciled and in dialogue in Christ.
- d. The year 1992 reminded us that the missionary enterprise led to the alienation of peoples from their cultural roots in many places. The power of the dominant culture of those who brought the gospel has denied the right of peoples to their cultures; and in Latin America there has been systematic destruction of indigenous cultures. In many other places people have been taught to despise their culture and in others, minority groups do not participate -- except by omission -- in shaping their culture. Hence, promotion of the liberation of cultures and helping peoples to shape their own, freely and holistically, is also an essential component of the mission of the Church.
- e. However, we also discern the ambiguous nature of culture. There are elements which enslave and degrade. In some places, the articulation of the gospel has lost its evangelistic cutting edge and has become captive to the debilitating dimensions of culture. Therefore, there is also need to develop a critical awareness of the ambiguities of culture in the light of the liberating mission of God that builds inclusive community and brings fuller life for all.
- f. The difficulty experienced by churches in giving account of their particular experiences of the embodiment of the gospel in their own cultural milieu, is yet another element of the background against which the agenda on gospel and culture is set.

Four Basic Concerns

The above considerations point to four basic concerns that the study will have to highlight:

1. *Authentic witness within plural cultures:*

Though the gospel transcends cultures and it is never exhausted by any particular culture, it is never available apart from its cultural embodiment. Hence, it is important to explore the relationship between evangelism and culture in every place with respect to both the contextual proclamation of the gospel in all cultures and the transforming power of the gospel in any culture. Studying the nature of the creative and mutual enrichment between the gospel and particular cultures as well as the mutual critique between particular cultures and specific understandings of the gospel will also be significant. Therefore, promoting active inculcation on the one hand, and facilitating a critical approach to those elements within any culture that enslave and degrade human community in the light of the liberating love of God in Christ on the other, are concerns behind the agenda. For God wills the transformation of all things, including all cultures, in the light of the rule of God manifested in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

2. *Gospel, identities and community:*

God's love in Jesus Christ frees and unites, empowers identities and builds community. Yet, in mission history almost all encounters between the gospel and cultures are encounters between two cultures, often that of the bearers of the gospel – a dominant one, and that of the receiver – a subordinated one. Hence the liberation of suppressed cultures and the promotion of their self-understanding and authentic selfhood in itself is an urgently needed missionary task. 1992 is poignant reminder of this fact. Hence questions of justice and power as well as the rights of people to their cultures become central. The question of identities and community is urgent now more than ever as we discern the emergence of narrow group identities, nationalism based on ethnicity etc. in many parts of the world. At the same time there are also global forces such as market economy, multinational corporations, technology and communication at work. These bring into being forms of a global culture which at places threatens the identities and genuine community at the local level. What has the gospel to say in this context and how does evangelization promote the authentic identities of peoples and cultures and call them to community?

3. *Local congregations in pluralistic societies:*

How can local congregations be equipped to be authentic and contextual in each place? How can they be assisted to be genuinely indigenous in their faith, liturgy and structure? What are the relevant educational tasks appropriate for the contextual witness of a congregation? These are some crucial questions that the study will seek to address. Besides, almost in all parts of the world, communities have become culturally and religiously plural owing to the accelerated migration of peoples. Churches everywhere are called to live and witness in religiously and culturally plural societies. Plural identities can be seen within a single congregation (e.g. gender, generation, ethnic,

linguistic etc.). How do the people of God in each place live and witness in such contexts and what are the ways in which they can be adequately equipped to live and witness in the midst of plurality of cultures and religions?

4. *Christian witness and 'Unity in diversity':*

We affirm that the gospel we proclaim is one. Christian witness which is not united is a counter sign of the gospel. The ecumenical commitment in the agenda demands that churches are encouraged to seek active sharing of experiences, openended communication and mutual accountability as they explore afresh the encounter between the gospel and culture in their diverse contexts. This will call for an exploration of an ecumenical hermeneutics which can facilitate mutual understanding and recognition of their confessing the one faith, though in diverse cultural expressions.

The Study Process

In light of the above, the following programmatic expressions will be developed in the next few years:

1. Facilitating churches in every context to study the historical processes of the encounter between the gospel and their cultures. It is proposed to undertake several 'commissioned studies'. Hopefully the insights gained from careful analysis of such encounters in specific contexts will provide significant clues for the ecumenical task on the topic.
2. Facilitating local explorations in gospel and culture: the most important methodology will be to promote a large number of local initiatives. This will be in keeping with the mandate from the Vancouver Assembly of the WCC which called for local initiatives at the level of member churches in cooperation with regional councils and the World Council. Groups of women and then in many places are already working on this issue. Ensuring that their experiences and insights enhance the WCC's study process and putting them in touch with each other will be an essential step in the process.
- During 1993, through the cooperation of interested individuals, institutions, local, national and regional councils, a number of local study projects is being initiated, or the cooperation of already existing groups is being sought. One example is the action taken by the Senate of Serampore College, India, to inaugurate such a process at its meeting in January 1993. The Senate will invite not less than 15 theological faculties to initiate local study groups with at least two thirds of the participants coming from local churches, movements and agencies to ensure the participation of a widely representative group. The process will be evaluated at the 1994 Senate meeting before proceeding further to a national sharing event in 1995. Similar interest has been expressed by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the Canadian Council of Churches, and the Commission on Mission of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (CCBI). In Nordic countries it is hoped to explore the relation between the gospel and folk-churches. These are only some examples of what is planned.

- To facilitate such local initiatives, a general guideline will be provided, describing the nature and scope of the project. Ways of ensuring informal exchanges among groups in a given area and facilitating sharing of experiences across regions through existing journals and newsletters will also be explored.
- In late 1994 and early 1995, several national gatherings will share results.
- From the middle of 1995 to early 1996, it is hoped that regional gatherings on Gospel and Culture will be possible.
- The entire process will be brought to a nodal point at the next *World Conference on Mission and Evangelism*, in late 1996. It is hoped that it will be a 'working conference', with a substantial number of the participants representing those who have been involved in the study process at different levels since 1993. The Conference will hear local regional reports, undertake theological, missiological reflections on the reports and seek to spell out the implications for the mission of the Church in a culturally plural first decade of the new millennium. Particular attention will be given to the questions of mutual accountability, ecumenical hermeneutics and criteria for promoting

greater openness among churches to listen to and understand each other and to recognize the one faith they witness to in the midst of a plurality of cultural expressions.

- A final report on the process will be submitted to the next WCC Assembly in 1998.

CONCLUSION

Two closing remarks. First, on networking. An important aspect of this study is to seek ways of facilitating greater and more deliberate exchange and dialogue among churches and movements in diverse cultures. It is hoped that out of such exchanges several valid paradigms of the encounter between the gospel and cultures will be identified and affirmed as useful and mutually enriching within the ecumenical fellowship.

Finally, documentation. Already a process of documenting various persons, groups and institutions which are exploring the interrelationship between gospel and culture has begun in cooperation with the WCC library in Geneva. The names of these groups as well as a bibliography of essential writings will be published in one of a series of WCC Gospel and Culture pamphlets that is planned.

(Dr. Christopher Duraisingh is Executive Secretary for Gospel and Culture, Unit on Life, Education and Mission.)

News

Indigenous people

Mission Together

It is more than half way through the International Year for the World's Indigenous People.

It is hoped the theme — *Indigenous people: a new partnership* — has encouraged already the development of new relationships between States and indigenous peoples, who are an estimated 300 million worldwide in over 70 countries, and between the

international community and indigenous peoples.

The new partnership must be equitable and based on mutual respect and understanding.

Improvements will depend on action to many issues:

- ❖ land;
- ❖ self-government and self-development;
- ❖ resources;
- ❖ environmental issues;
- ❖ culture, language and education;

- ❖ health;
- ❖ social and economic conditions.

United Nations member states have been invited to raise public awareness through information and education projects, and to promote indigenous initiatives in television and radio, model projects on education, health, employment, housing and the environment. * * *

“The Lighthouse”

BY MARK WRIGHT-GEDCKE *

Overlooking the Caribbean Sea, on the edge of the city of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, stands a monument erected to Christopher Columbus. A new modern highway brings people to visit this mammoth building. From a distance, it looks like a pyramid in Egypt, built to honour a great Pharaoh.

The structure is called “The Lighthouse”. At night, lights in the shape of a cross shine from its top. During the day, you can see crosses inlaid on its outside walls. The building seems to wear the Christian religion as a great cloak.

A special message from Pope John Paul II is beautifully inscribed on one wall. Dated October 12, 1992, it marks the 500th anniversary of the first Spanish expedition to encounter the Americas. On another wall, Scripture verses and sayings from the Greek philosophers are inscribed. They face a square where the flags of all the countries of North America, including Canada, wave proudly.

Hidden within The Lighthouse is a metal box reputed to contain some of the remains of Christopher Columbus. From outside through a corridor, this sepulchre can be seen. Armed personnel dressed in white sailor uniforms guard the box. Only eight people at a time are allowed into the interior.

On the other side of the highway stands a wall with crosses strung across its top. If you looked over the wall, you would find a vast neighbourhood of buildings. Here people live in great poverty. Thousands of men, women and children live, crushed together, with limited access to drinkable water no proper sewage, inadequate health care and education for only some of their children.

* Mark Wright-Gedcke is minister of St. Lawrence Presbyterian Church in Ontario, Canada. In October 1992, he visited the Dominican Republic as part of a study tour. This article appeared in the March 1993 issue of the Presbyterian Record, the national magazine of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and is used with permission.

The Dominican government built the wall to shield tourists and dignitaries coming to the Lighthouse from the poverty. The wall hides the truth. The ordinary people of the Dominican Republic call it “The Wall of Shame”.

The shame is profound. Over 30,000 people were displaced from their barrios (neighbourhoods) to make room for The Lighthouse. Over \$75 million was spent on a structure of only symbolic value. (In the 1990s, modern ocean vessels do not need this “lighthouse” to guide them.)

The Lighthouse memorializes the first sustained encounter between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Ironically, the results of this contact are nowhere mentioned on the building.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus found a populated island. The Spaniards called the inhabitants Tainos, which means the noble or good ones. To the original population of Taino people, estimated between three and eight million, the Europeans brought war, slavery, poverty and disease at an epidemic level. In 1514, after 15 years of coexistence with the Spanish, the Spaniard's own census estimated the number of Tainos at 28,000. In 1542, 50 years after Columbus's arrival, only 200 Taino adults remained. In less than a century after first contact, the native people on the island called Hispaniola were extinct.

In the capital city of Santo Domingo, one can see the strength of African roots among these Spanish-speaking people. Believing their social system needed slavery, the Europeans brought many Africans to this island.

My visit to The Lighthouse, and the history which lies behind it, challenge me: Why is the truth about the extinction of the Taino people not proclaimed on The Lighthouse? What kind of Christian witness is reflected in this expensive symbolic structure? Would the resources used for this building have been more appropriately invested in raising the standard of living of the poor?

I wonder about the kind of missionary message proclaimed to the Taino people 500 years ago? What about the results? And what is the message the church proclaims today to the people of the Dominican Republic through the gospel according to The Lighthouse?

As A Christian, I want to be part of sharing the good news of God's love through Jesus Christ. But the Lighthouse confronts me with the reality that Europeans tied Christian faith to the goal of conquering and subduing

the North American continent and its people. The Lighthouse and The Wall of Shame blatantly symbolize the oppression of indigenous and African-rooted peoples which continues today.

As a Christian with European roots, I believe we need to confess to God the fact we continue to benefit and gain wealth at the expense of those who live at the bottom of our social systems. As a Canadian Christian, I am deeply ashamed.

News

Communication Development

L R Bawla — The Presbyterian Church of Myanmar

It has been discovered that in many places actual illiteracy was not as bad as reported previously. Many young people who were not illiterate in the truest sense of the word but whose ability to read and write was so poor were apparently reported as illiterates.

Reading Campaign

Reading campaigns have been held in Church halls or private homes on Sundays after church service usually lasting for three hours. The campaign aims to enlist many people as regular readers and is a wholly new venture. Thank God it happens to be very popular and successful especially for ordinary church people. Questions and discussion took place.

It was observed that:

○ The campaign attracted mostly middle-aged people in the Church.

○ Many letters were received "to emphasise information gained

from the reading" and not only on "reading for its own sake." One of the books selected for reading was *History of the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar* which had never been read by many participants; they began to get interested in the history and life of the Church.

Literature Fellowships

The aim is to foster 'quality reading' to the public. At the LF, portions of the Bible, hymn books or song books were selected for reading, discussions and comments. LFs were held on Sundays with refreshments served in the course of discussion. According to reports the youngest participant was 17 and the oldest was 76!

○ Many letters were received which complained that the half-day Fellowship was too short.

○ More people should be invited and LF should be held much more often.

○ Songs and poetry received much greater interest in discussion than prose or ordinary essay-writings.

Literature Seminar

These were the culmination of the whole programme. Literature

Seminars were well-planned and carefully selected people were invited. Several persons were assigned to write essays on chosen topics of about 2,500 to 6,000 words and these were read, critically studied and commented on from the view point of literature. The papers with all the comments made on them were compiled in book form and sold at half-price to all participants.

○ Ways should be explored to include more people particularly women and young people below 30.

Writers' Workshop

This was an attempt to produce many writers from among young people. Applications were called for and fifty-nine people from all walks of life applied. After several lectures on the art of writing, the participants were assigned to write essays on a topic of their own choice and these were checked by the instructors. Re-written essays were read, discussed by their peers and instructors. Workshoppers are supposed to write at least ten essays — articles, story, book reviews — before they graduate which may take a year or so.

FOCUS ON CHILDREN IN ASIA

In countless ways the very lives of all children of the world are becoming increasingly precarious and serious violations of the human dignity and rights of children all over the world continue to escalate unabated. Every year about fourteen million children in the "Third World" die before reaching their fifth birthday and about 150 million of these children are immersed in abject poverty. In the "First World", children are also facing an intensifying barrage of relentlessly intransigent problems such as physical abuse, hopelessness, drug dependence, sexual exploitation, and involuntary involvement in juvenile and adolescent crimes.

On November 20, 1989, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of "The Treaty Declaration on the Rights of Children", the 44th United Nations General Assembly adopted the "UN Convention on the Rights of Children." This convention was initiated with the understanding that it must be determined what is the "very best" that adult human societies can bequeath to children and that this "very best" must be made available to children if there is to be a viable future for the human race. This treaty calls for changes in our basic understandings so that we recognize that children are subjects with inherent and inalienable rights-of-practice as opposed to the understanding that children are objects worthy of protection.

Presently 108 among 132 countries the world over which have signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, have also ratified it. The Japanese government as one of the drafters and proposers of the convention to the United Nations General Assembly and as a regular member of the Human Rights Commission, has responsibility for its ratification. In order to complete this ratification it will be necessary for the Cabinet to turn the convention over to the Diet for recognition and passage. Beforehand, however, it will be necessary to examine ancillary domestic laws and provisions which may have to be modified if contradictions or conflicts are found to exist between the convention and domestic legal codes and provisions. For this purpose we must cross-reference each of the provisions of the convention with each and every provision of all domestic laws and legal constructs.

The Japanese Government has translated the convention as a "Treaty on 'Juvenile' Rights." It is clear that this translation does retain the understanding as rooted in the convention that a child is a "person in toto" with fundamental rights therein pertaining. Even though this

translation relates directly to human rights provisions, the translations of some of the words in the original convention into Japanese continue to countenance discrimination by the persistent use of such words as "shuzoku" (*ethnic*) and "genjumin" (*indigenous*) which have been used in the past as linguistic symbols of discrimination against minorities. It is necessary for the Japanese government to correct its translation in the light of the basic and fundamental purpose of the original UN Convention on the Rights of Children.

One the basis of the above, we, the representatives to the 27th General Assembly of United Church of Christ in Japan hereby resolve to petition all related organizations to seek the revision of all pertinent domestic laws so as to bring about the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children.

For these purposes we invoke the following petition:

1. That the UN Convention on the Rights of Children be ratified at the earliest possible moment.
2. That along with the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, related domestic laws be revised as soon as possible.
3. That the various problems contained in the government's translation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children be corrected.

STREET CHILDREN OF ASIA

Who are the Street Children?

The term *street children* was aptly coined sometime in the 1980s as a definite term to identify children who have chosen to spend most of their time on the streets in various "occupations". With ages ranging from 5 to 18 years old, these children play the sidewalks in a desperate attempt to eke out whatever meagre amount they can to bring home to their families for food, medicine, or whatever is needed for their day-to-day subsistence. Most of them are the children of poor parents who migrated from the rural areas in the hope of making a life in the city, but whose lack of education rendered them ill-equipped to struggle for survival in the urban jungle and are thus confined to a life of abject poverty.

Different countries define street children in different ways. However, three categories of street children have been identified in the Philippines:

- 1. Children working on the street, with regular family contact.** Comprising about 70% in some countries like the Philippines, these working children have family connections of a regular nature. Most of this group of children still attend school and return home at the end of each working day. They are referred to as *children on the street*.
- 2. Children living and working on the street.** Children in this category see the street as their home and from it they seek income, food, shelter, and a sense of family among companions. Family ties may exist but are negatively viewed, and their former home is infrequently visited. In some countries, about 20%, and in others as in Thailand, the majority belong to this category; they are referred to as *children of the street*.
- 3. Completely abandoned and neglected children.** Having severed all ties with a biological family, these children are entirely on their own, not just for material but also for psychological survival; therefore they require a very different approach.

Several countries of the region recognize the three categories of street children, agreeing on a common denominator: the children are at high risk and vulnerable on the street, with or without family.

Some countries prefer to restrict the definition of street children in order to reflect the priority they are willing or able to give to this group of disadvantaged children at the present time.

In South Asia, an unpublished UNICEF paper on "Exploitation of Working and Street Children" bases the identification of street children on the availability of shelter for them and their level of contact with their families. The three categories are:

- 1. Children who have continuous family contact but who stay with their parents on the public pavements in urban areas;**
- 2. Working children who spend all their days and some of their nights on the streets and in public places, but who have occasional family contact: "children on the street";**
- 3. Children who do not have any contact with their families such as orphans, runaways, refugees, and displaced persons: "children of the street" – this is the most crucial group as these children do not have any protection from the vagaries of nature and the society.**

The situation of street children challenges us to "trace the paths of deterioration that led to their present situation at home, in the streets, or in institutions;" it begs us to understand "what led people within such families to move apart, lose family connections, and become socially isolated. Which factors led to loss of self-esteem by parents and children and to the downward spirals of severe distress? Which combination of factors seemed to lead certain families or certain children in those families along this path?"

Seeking answers to these questions makes us better equipped to take on the challenge of addressing the situation of street children. By initiating programmes that address directly the very roots of the problems, we take the first steps along the long road towards finding a rational solution to this phenomenon.

How then do we develop our programme of services? An important grassroots strategy in programme development is the process of clarifying philosophy, vision, mission, and goals to ensure a common understanding and direction among GO and NGO development workers. Programme planning is then based on a common vision.

Current efforts in helping street children fall under three broad types of programmes or services, which were evolved in response to an analysis of the three major categories of street children and their specific needs and circumstances.

Community-based Programmes support children who maintain regular contacts with their families, and are preventive in approach. This type of programme is based on the belief that one way to prevent the further deterioration of families and the eventual spill-over of unwanted children into the streets is to strengthen the very foundation of family life, and to organize families into self-managing community groups with leadership skills. By providing opportunities and skills for self-employment or adequate employment to the heads of family and ensuring the delivery of basic services such as health, education, and dwelling, the structure of a normal family life is preserved. Parents are able to provide their children with love and attention and the children are able to experience the normal quality of upbringing they deserve.

Community-based programmes may be a partnership or joint effort of local communities, people's organizations, non-government groups, city governments. Under this programme of services, the street child and his parent are provided with livelihood alternatives other than earning a living on the street. It aims to ensure that the means of earning a living is not exploitative and harmful to the child.

Centre-based Programmes provide care for total abandoned or orphaned children, temporary shelter, and other supportive and rehabilitative services. These programmes are designed primarily for the "hardcore" street child who has no home to go to or who may have severed all ties with his family. The Centre's social workers assets the children either to re-establish ties with their families, or arrange with a foster family to provide the children with shelter, care, and protection. Many street children have been physically or sexually abused in their own homes. Thus, several of them find the prospect of returning home repulsive and may finally decide to stay away from the Centre rather than be sent back to their families. These children and their families must first be supported with counselling before they can be reconciled or provided with foster homes.

Street-based Programmes reach out to children right on the street where they live and work, particularly to those children who have irregular contacts with their families. This strategy recognizes the child's need for survival and income, as it neither forces the children to go back to their families nor to enter a Centre of any kind. Through street-based programmes, the negative impacts of street life are softened through activities that allow the talents and interests of the child to come to the fore. The child is regarded as a young individual needing attention and guidance. He is regarded as he truly is — a child, not as an adult expected to contribute to the family coffers.

These various programme categories include support of street children and their families through non-formal and formal education, organization of parents and children, health services, counselling and casework with families, vocational and other skills training, value clarification, para-legal training, social credit/loan assistance to parents, and foster home care.

These programmes and services operationalize the strategies specified in UNICEF'S urban work section plan:

- a. Extension and adaptation of basic education,
- b. Community-based development and services,
- c. Preservation and support for family stability,
- d. Promotion of legal means for the protection of the legal rights of the child, and
- e. Support to environmental protection.

The Philippine National Project on Street Children, while not failing to support centre-based interventions, has demonstrated that the needs and problems of the children are better addressed in the context of a larger programme, e.g., urban basic services programme with its strong emphasis on community participation and community empowerment. Project experiences show that innovative, community-based approaches and actions relevant to the realities and needs of street children and provide alternatives to traditional "institutionalization" of children. One specific project strategy is the organization of Local Committees for the Welfare of Children, supported by the training of personnel and volunteers, production of teaching materials, technical consultancy, data banking, and resource generation for NGOs/GOs.

(This report was excerpted from *The Street Children of Asia: a profile published by CHILDHOPE Asia, 1210 Peñafrancia Street, Paco, 1007 Manila, Philippines.*)

* * *

GENERAL EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN ASIA

In all societies, education is a fundamental issue: one in five of the inhabitants of our planet attends classes in an educational establishment; in practically every country

in the world, the teaching profession is one of the largest; and education generally accounts for 10-15 per cent of public budgets, and in some cases up to one-third of a country's expenditure.

The least developed or the poorest countries (in Subsaharan Africa and Southern Asia) suffer from an accumulation of problems of finance and human resources at a time when the needs of their educational systems, already hardpressed, will continue to grow rapidly in the coming years. High illiteracy rates and low primary schooling rates, combined with in-effective schooling and low educational standards ought to spur officials to give priority to the goal of education for all. In particular, it is essential: (a) to find new ways to generalise primary education with a view to securing irreversible results on the educational and literacy fronts, while reducing sex-based inequalities in education; (b) to train the manpower that is indispensable for the development of rural and urban areas; (c) to strengthen science and mathematics teaching at all levels; (d) to encourage communities to contribute to the financing and control of the educational services offered; (e) to improve the management and administration of the schools; and (f) to improve the role of teachers by means of incentives related to their qualifications and the performance of their duties.

Education News No. 8 (1992) published by the International Catholic Centre for UNESCO, 9 Rue Cler - 75007 Paris, France.

HIGH SCHOOLS IN TAIWAN DEVELOP NEW "LIFE" CURRICULUM

The four Presbyterian high schools in Taiwan, with the cooperation of the PCT, are sponsoring the development of a new curriculum for the "Philosophy of Life" courses taught there. Traditionally the study of the Bible had been the main focus of this course. Beginning in the 1970's, however, the problems of a rapidly changing society and an overwhelmingly non-Christian student body prompted the teachers to rethink their approach. Plans were developed to create a whole new curriculum. The new course currently under development hopes to be a practical hands-on approach to help students think about the issues they all face in life and to consider some biblical perspectives on these issues.

The new curriculum has the following goals: "To use the traditions and resources of the Christian faith to teach students to understand and fully experience the meaning of faith and life. To indirectly nurture in them a reverence for life; to plant deep roots within them to be a loving person, a person with dignity, a responsible person, and a creative person. To encourage them to use these attributes to serve the community and to give glory to God for the good of the people."

The complete course consists of a series of approximately 90 lessons taught over the years. These lessons cover seven general topics:

1. **Understanding and accepting yourself.** ("Searching to understand yourself"). To teach the students to understand and accept their own limitation and possibilities.
2. **Living in inter-personal relationships.** To explore how the students are related to their friends and families. To encourage them to live with others in harmony. This includes exploration of parental as well as male-female relationships, and discussions about freedom.
3. **Man and Nature: Living in the natural order.** To search for knowledge and understanding about nature, including accepting humankind's stewardship of nature, environmental concerns, coping with natural disasters, and attitudes toward the use of time and space.
4. **Christ and Culture: Theological reflection on the homeland culture.** To teach the students to accept and value their own identity and culture using Christ as the standard.
5. **Participating in social forces.** How to live within a community structure. To explore society, social trends, the role of Christians in society, in the family, and in the church. To encourage social service, that is, working as a group rather than as individuals.
6. **Ultimate value: Facing the ultimate reality and changing reality.** To explore the meaning of life, humankind's dignity, conscience, suffering, humans vs. God, stable truths in the midst of a changing reality, issues of choice and love, how God is working, and how we respond.
7. **Creativity within the daily routine.** These lessons aim to help the students explore how to plan their careers and lives, especially in light of Taiwan's highly competitive college entrance exams. Students are encouraged to make creativity a daily part of their lives; in making choices, in choosing how much to participate, how much to withdraw.

The coursework for each semester is composed of lessons primarily from one of the seven topics, though lessons from the other six are also included. Topic four (Christ and Culture), however, is evenly distributed among all the semesters.

As of September 1992, five lessons have been completed and are currently being tested in the schools. New lessons are being written and will also undergo a period of testing and revision. The teachers hope to complete the project in three years.

(Published by TAIWAN CHURCH NEWS, 334 Youth Road, Tainan 700, Taiwan. January, February 1993.)

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-98)

The WCC recently launched a plan for a mid-decade visit to each member Church over the next two years to listen to the experience of the churches and to encourage a reaffirmation of their commitment to the Decade. Regional and national ecumenical bodies will play a supportive role in the project.

Re-imagining: A Global Theological Conference

This will be a major mid-decade event to take place November 4-7, 1993 at the Minneapolis Convention Center, Minnesota, USA. How would symbols, stories and themes of religious tradition look and sound if people re-imagined them? What if they re-imagined them in ways that empower women in the church?

For more information about this global gathering for women and men where these questions will be explored, please contact The Rev. Sally L. Hill, 122 West Franklin, Minneapolis, MN 55404, USA. Tel. (612) 870-3600.

First meeting of Mandated Working Group on Education.

The first meeting of the new WCC Working Group on Education took place in Geneva 18-22 January 1993. The sixteen members of the Group are drawn from the constituencies of the four new Units and the Office of Relations of the WCC.

One of their primary functions is to reflect and comment upon the educational work of the WCC with the purpose of advising on future directions and areas of cutting edge focus and new initiative.

In this first meeting they developed a statement on a common vision of education for the WCC, and established policy guidelines for WCC involvement in educational programmes and a process for reviewing and evaluating such programmes.

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: AN UPDATE

Education Newsletter No. 2, 1992 carried the report of the ecumenical consultation on this topic held in Moscow in June 1992. The consultation made several recommendations. One called on the Churches and the WCC "to assist in the sponsorship and planning of consultations and training programmes on the development of curricula and curricular materials and resources, according to the needs of the different Churches...."

— Continued next issue

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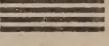
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